

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 /066 W
-----083556 202048Z /45

R 201527Z JAN 78
FM AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5755
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 RIO DE JANEIRO 0313

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, BR
SUBJECT: MAGALHAES PINTO PERSISTS IN HIS CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENT

REF: BRASILIA 0155; 77 RIO DE JANEIRO 5887; RIO DE JANEIRO 0184

1. SUMMARY. DESPITE GEISEL'S DESIGNATION OF GENERAL FIGUEIREDO AS HIS SUCCESSOR, SNATOR MAGALHAES PINTO HAS INDICATED HE WILL CONTINUE HIS CANDIDACY UP TO THE ARENA PARTY CONVENTION. THIS CONVENTION WILL PROBABLY NOW BE HELD IN EARLY APRIL RATHER THAN CLOSER TO SEPTEMBER 5. THE FINAL DATE SPECIFIED BY LAW BEFORE WHICH THE CONVENTION MUST BE HELD. AN EARLIER CONVENTION WOULD NOT ONLY DISPOSE OF THE CONTINUING PROBLEM OF MAGALHAES BUT WOULD RESOLVE THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION PROBLEM BEFORE WHAT PROMISES TO BE BITTER INTRA-PARTY CONFLICTS OVER OFFICES TO BE FILLED BY INDIRECT ELECTION. END SUMMARY.

2. AS REPORTED BRASILIA 0155, GEISEL'S DESIGNATION OF GERNERAL FIGUEIREDO AS HIS CHOSEN SUCCESSOR HAS NOT DETERRED SENATOR MAGALHAES PINTO FROM PERSISTING IN HIS OWN CAMPAIGN AS THE ARENA CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

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WHILE MAGALHAES HAS BEEN INSISTING THAT HE REMAINS A CANDIDATE, THE ARENA LEADERSHIP HAS INDICATED THAT THE PARTY CONVENTION TO NOMINATE THE PARTY CANDIDATE WILL NOW BE HELD IN EARLY APRIL (VARIOUS DATES HAVE BEEN MENTIONED, THE MOST RECENT BEING APRIL 9) RATHER THAN AT A DATE LATER IN THE YEAR. ACCORDING TO CURRENT LEGAL PROVISIONS THE CONVENTION MUST BE HELD PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER

5 AND THE COMMON ASSUMPTION HAS BEEN THAT THE CONVENTION WOULD BE CALLED SHORTLY BEFORE THAT DATE AS IN THE PAST. IN JUSTIFYING AN APRIL CONVENTION DATE SENATOR PORTELLA TOLD THE PRESS JANUARY 9 IT WOULD BE ABNORMAL TO MAINTAIN TWO CANDIDATES (E.G., FIGUEIREDO AND CHAVES) FOR THE PARTY NOMINATION FOR A SIX MONTHS PERIOD. ARENA PRESIDENT PEREIRA INDICATED JANUARY 10 THAT THERE WAS STRONG SENTIMENT FOR A CONVENTION AS EARLY AS FEBRUARY.

3. IN OTHER MINOR DEVELOPMENTS, MAGALHAES HAS INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO DEBATE PUBLICLY WITH GENERAL FIGUEIREDO, A NOTION WHICH THE GENERAL REJECTED. MAGALHAES HAS ALSO INDICATED THAT HE WOULD WELCOME THE SUPPORT OF OUSTED EX-ARMY MINISTER FROTA AND RECENTLY RESIGNED CHIEF OF THE MILITARY CABINET ABREU. (ABREU LATER REFUSED TO ANSWER A PRESS QUERY ON WHETHER OR NOT HE WOULD SUPPORT THE SENATOR.) SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE TWO OTHER DEVELOPMENTS SUGGEST THE REGIME IS NOW BEGINNING TO ATTEMPT TO HARASS THE SENATOR. A SERIES OF SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS IN PARANA BEFORE BUSINESS LEADERS WAS CANCELLED AT THE LAST MINUTE AND THE SENATOR WAS UNABLE TO OBTAIN SPACE IN RIO'S HOTEL GLORIA FOR A CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS.

4. PERMITTING MAGALHAES' NAME TO POSSIBLY COME TO A VOTE BEFORE THE ARENA PARTY CONVENTION SUGGESTS THAT THE REGIME IS CONFIDENT IT CAN CONTROL A LARGE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MAJORITY OF THE APPROXIMATELY 800 DELEGATES. (PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT ARENA LEADERS ESTIMATE THAT MAGALHAES WOULD WIN ONLY FROM 5 TO 10 PERCENT OF CONVENTION VOTES.) THIS SOLUTION TO THE MAGALHAES PROBLEM WOULD BE MORE OPEN AND GRACEFUL THAN STRATAGEMS DISCUSSED EARLIER WHICH CENTERED ON WAYS TO PREVENT HIS NAME FROM REACHING THE CONVENTION, ALTHOUGH THIS TACTIC COULD STILL BE USED.

5. HOLDING THE ARENA PARTY CONVENTION EARLIER RATHER THAN LATER HAS THREE MAJOR ADVANTAGES TO THE REGIME. FIRST, THE CONVENTION WULD TAKE PLACE WELL BEFORE THE FINAL SELECTION OF MOST STATE GOVERNORS, VICE GOVERNORS, MAYORS OF STATE CAPITALS AND INDIRECTLY ELECTED SENATORS. (THE REGIME HAS INDICATED THAT THESE WILL NOT BE SELECTED UNTIL SOMETIME AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IS APPROVED BY THE PARTY.) THEREFORE, THE REGIME WOULD ENTER THE CONVENTION WITH ASPIRANTS FOR THESE IMPORTANT STATE (AND SENATE) POSITIONS STILL SEEKING THE PRESIDENT'S BLESSING AND ANXIOUS TO AVOID GIVING ANY OFFENSE TO THE REGIME WHICH MIGHT JEOPARDIZE THEIR CHANCES. THEY WOULD THUS PROVE LIKELY TO BE MORE DOCILE IN RUBBER STAMPING

FIGUEIREDO THAN THEY MIGHT WHEN THE GOVERNORSHIPS AND OTHER OFFICES HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH PERSONS OTHER THAN THEMSELVES. SECONDLY, THERE IS ALWAYS THE CHANCE, AS

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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MAGALHAES MAY HAVE BEEN HOPING, THAT FIGUEIREDO MIGHT STUMBLE BETWEEN NOW AND SEPTEMBER OR THAT UNFORESEEABLE DEVELOPMENTS COULD UNDERMINE HIS CAMPAIGN AND MAGALHAES WOULD BE THE NATURAL BENEFICIARY AS THE OTHER CANDIDATE ALREADY IN PLACE. ALTHOUGH FIGUEIREDO COULD CONCEIVABLY STUMBLE, THE ODDS THAT MAGALHAES OR ANY OTHER CIVILIAN WOULD REPLACE HIM ARE PROBABLY NIL. AND FINALLY, AN EARLY CONVENTION WILL PRESUMABLY DISPOSE OF THE NETTLESOME PROBLEM OF MAGALHAES IN THE FIRST PART OF WHAT PROMISES TO BE A TURBULENT YEAR IN BRAZILIAN POLITICS.

6. ONE RIO ARENA FEDERAL DEPUTY HAS SUGGESTED THAT WHEN THE CONVENTION DOES CHOOSE FIGUEIREDO, MAGALHAES, UNLESS HE HAS ALREADY MADE HIS PEACE WITH THE REGIME, COULD CONCEIVABLY BOLT ARENA, UNDER THIS DEPUTY'S SCENARIO, MAGALHAES MIGHT WILL THEN SEEK TO ORGANIZE A NEW PARTY IN ANTICIPATION OF LEGALIZATION OF PERHAPS FOUR OR FIVE POLITICAL PARTIES LATER THIS YEAR OR IN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. IT IS TOO LATE, HOWEVER, FOR HIM TO JOIN THE OPPOSITION MDB TO SEEK ITS NOMINATION FOR THE PRESIDENCY. IT IS OBVIOUSLY PREMATURE TO SPECULATE AT THIS TIME ON MAGALHAES' FUTURE ACTIVITIES.

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7. EMBASSY CONCURS.
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